



# Intricacies and paradoxes: federalism and secessionism in Nigeria, the case of Biafra agitation

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## General Note



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## ABSTRACT

This paper is a critical exploration of the current challenges bedeviling the Nigerian state, capable of heating up the polity and disintegrating the Nigerian project. As a heterogeneous state, Nigeria operates a federal structure which accommodates a Central government and sub-national, otherwise, state governments with several other municipal administrations; local government, therefore enabling a tripartite level of governance. Nigeria thus consists of various ethnic groups and sub-national states, all of which are at the mercy of the Central government. This duplicity of government is not alien to a federal structure as identified, except that in the Nigerian case, there is ineffable strife for dominance. As a result, issues relating to marginalization, economic imbalance, social alienation, ethnic suspicion and superior-subordination contestation are recurring malaises in the system. These maladies have led to a renewal of the call for secession by the South-Eastern ethnic group of Nigeria for a Republic of Biafra, on the basis that they are being short-changed in the political cum socio-economic largess accumulating from the Centre. The logic for this call, nay, agitation for self-determination by this group is not faulty in itself except that the laws of the land; Nigeria 1999 Constitution (as amended) does not guarantee self-determination or secession by any group of the Nigerian political environment.

This paper consequently argues that the anxiety as well as angst attributable to this agitation has the tendencies of not only disrupting the relative-peace presently enjoyed by the various groups, but is also, if not controlled, capable of plunging the country into a state of economic comatose and perpetual fragility.

**Keywords:** Federalism, Biafra, Secession, Nigeria, South-East

## 1. BACKGROUND: MEANING OF FEDERALISM

Federalism is an arrangement in which powers are divided between various components and levels of government in such a way that each level enjoys a constitutionally stipulated power or autonomy. This autonomy covers certain jurisdiction and/or policy areas as contained in the constitution. Thus, each unit within the federation enjoys constitutional and substantial powers (IDEA, 2015:1). Schuck (2006) sees federalism as a system of jurisdictional division of political powers between a central government and subnational states with each having its own territory upon which such a jurisdictional power is exercised. The idea flowing concomitantly from the above definitions gives the impression that federalism is a political arrangement involving varied layers of government, usually between a state or subordinate government and a national government to ensure that none is subservient to the other but each works at par towards realizing the goal of the central government. It is in lieu of this that some writers have seen federalism as a compromise between separate and distinct governments. According to Peterson (2004), the binding together of distinct group members under a symbolic authority or head is known as federalism. Peterson further noted that federalism has existed for a long time, yet there has been continued difficulty in defining a federal state despite 70% of the countries of the world having federal characteristics.

As opined by Imuetinyan and Ogbeide (2016:5), the necessity of altering the strife of domination among majority and minority groups alike and the need to revise exclusion threat gave birth to federalism. Hence, federalism douses the tensions that might arise among and between levels of government in such a way that none colours the existence of other or dominates the workings of the other. The duo further posits that federalism gives minorities the opportunity of governance even though there is the risk of fragmenting sub-national governments and subjecting them to hostilities. They also argue that federalism paves way for cross-ethnic co-operation, especially in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual countries. At the same time, federalism multiplies political gains and benefits which in turn shifts the attention of the federating units from the centre. Imuetinyan and Ogbeide further posited that as far as countrywide integration among diverse countries is concerned, federal remains a notable and rewarding arrangement.

According to IDEA (2015:2), because federalism involves more than one level of government, it also makes arrangement for split of powers according to the dictates of the constitution. In a case of two levels, there is usually the national and sub-national government(s). Nonetheless, there is also the case of a tripartite distribution of power whereby three; central, state and local government, levels of government is recognized by the state. A typical example of this is Nigeria and South Africa. In this multi-layered relationship, each level of government is distinct from the other, especially in the areas of territorial boundaries, exercise of autonomy over certain matters upon which each level has jurisdiction, yet this does not in any way undermine the mutual importance of the parts to the whole. Inherent in any federal structure is institutions of governance at each level, a written and rigid constitution which spells the powers of these institutions, and a judicial body that adjudicate disputes among these levels of government.

Rokkan and Urwin (1982) in Hassan (2014:28) opined that the evolution of federations can be subsumed as collection of previously autonomous states or the decentralization of authority to federating units. These processes have been referred to as organic and mechanical federalism. Weinstock (2001) refers to them as federal integration and federal restructuring. Federal integration is such in which a constitutional pact is signed among various autonomous units while a mechanical federalism is that involving decentralized developments leading to the federalization of a hitherto unitary system. Hassan (2014:29), however rejected this typology and offered a three-way arrangement; that is putting together, coming together and holding together. The concept of coming together federations is seen as similar to the notions of federal integration and unions. Holding together federations are diverse federations formed through brokering or negotiation, whereas, putting together describes federations formed through coercion; that is forced together, and is deficient of democratic principles i.e. former Soviet Union.

Federations have also been classified according to ethnic and linguistic diversities. The first category is about federations that ensure territorial power sharing without due recognition of ethnic and linguistic loyalties (Burgess, 2000:17). Federations in the

second category have due recognition of diversity and echoes these in its structures (Hassan, 2014). This could be referred to as indigenous and conglomerate federations.

## REASONS FOR ADOPTION OF FEDERALISM

According to IDEA (2015:3), federalism is adoption for the following reasons:

**Scale:** This credited the operation of federalism to the adoption of democracy which allowed for citizens to participate directly in political life. Democracy used to be associated with small states until it could not cater for large political units. In other words, the rulers can stay out of touch of the needs of the people due to the widening gap between as a result of geographical remoteness. Thus, the farther the government, the more the distortion of the voices, yearnings, and aspirations of the people. Federalism is able effectively bridge this gap by creating a multi-layered exercise of power both at the state and central levels thereby affording opportunity for greater participation.

**Diversity:** Aside from allowing for greater participation, federalism recognizes diversities of countries and accommodates them in such a way that there is inter-group relationships. Diversities such as ethnic, religious, linguistic or other cultural affinities are not only reflected, but are also recognized. Federalism gives autonomy to these diverse groups and affords them the opportunity to exercise self-rule whilst participating in shared or common rule.

A federal constitution aside from satisfying demands for autonomy and recognition, also protect minority interest, prevent inter-group, and reduce secessionist tendencies by constituent units in a federal structure.

Aside from adopting federalism for scale and diversity, IDEA (2015) noted that federalism may also be considered on the following proviso:

- *Identity federalism:* Owing to commonality or interest, culturally, linguistically, religiously or otherwise distinct constituent units may decide to live together in one polity. This does not in any way deny them of demanding autonomy or deride them of their distinctiveness. Examples of such arrangement are Canada and Switzerland.
- *Efficiency federalism:* As in the case of Germany and Argentina, nations with expanse geographical space and cultural homogeneity may for the reasons of improved democratic precepts and accountability, maintenance of national unity and coherence in national policy, wish to come together. This sort of arrangement guarantees decentralizing of authority whilst giving the control of resources to indigenous groups or individuals of the constituent units. However, the question of the suitability of federalism for a particular country is a function of the balance between both common and divergent interests and identities respectively.

## FEATURES OF FEDERALISM

### **Division of power**

Riker in Soder (2009:10) asserts that in a federal arrangement, authority and powers are shared between the central government and regional units and each sphere has its realm where its decisions are final. Taking a cue from the above, it is evident that a distinguishing feature of federalism is the fact that power is divided between various levels of governments. That is power is divided between the central and other constituent units. These varied governments share a common governing system and further maintain their own peculiar governing system in such a way that neither is subservient and both rule over the same territory with its own authority to exercise authority independently of the other. As observed by Soder (2009), sub-national units of a federation have absolute discretionary powers over certain matters.

### **Self-Rule**

Sub-national units in a federal structure are endowed with certain amount of self-government. Even though, as noted by Peterson (2004), the notion of self-rule becomes problematic in determining the degree and extent of power should be wielded and exercised by sub-national governments with respect to the central or national government. The constitution of the country often contains the powers to be wielded by each of the regions in a federation. To this end, Soder (2009), quizzed about what the sub-national units are permitted to do and what the margin between the central and sub-national states is. The way forward thus is the conferment of mutually-exclusive powers and responsibilities on the regions. The central or national government should have its jurisdiction, i.e. foreign politics while the state takes care of education. This clear division is called dual federalism or layer cake federalism.

To Ginsberg et al. (2007), up until 1937, dual federalism system is a system of government operational in the US wherein the vital powers were shared between the national and sub-national governments and it is easy to observe the exclusivity of the national government from the states in terms of areas controlled. The scholars (Ginsberg et.al.) further opined that Cooperative federalism allows for cooperative and cooperative interaction between the national state and local governments in solving common problems

instead of formulating programmed disjointedly. Such a design is tagged marble-cake as it hardly delineates the authority of the central government from the sub-national governments.

### Others

Building on the work of Riker, Soder (2009) asserted that there is centralized and decentralized federalism. By looking at a range between and maximum, Riker envisages likelihoods among the federating units. Regarding the minimum federalism, decisions made by leaders are constricted and narrow thus granting the federation enormous powers. Maximum on the other hand defines the scenario of leaders of the central government making choices without prior consultation with leaders of the federating units. Additionally, federations usually have two-tiered legislature; an example of which is the Nigerian and United States' Senate and House of Representatives. There is also a codified and written laws; constitution, which is rigid resulting from its difficulty in amendment. As observed by Ginsberg et al. (2007), a typical example of this is the US constitution which is difficult to amend. Another striking feature is the apex or Supreme Court which not only acts as the custodian of the constitution but is also responsible for settlement of disputes between and among regions of federations.

## 2. FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA: EVOLUTION AND STRUCTURE

Federal experiments in Africa have been classified into two major categories: those introduced as part of the decolonization process and the ones that emerged in the last two decades as a rejoinder to internal conflicts. The first category consists of federations such as Mali, Central Africa and East African experimentations which were majorly a product of colonial overtures targeting at creating economically viable states. Meanwhile, there were also cases of federal entities created from individual states i.e. Nigeria and Cameroon (Aaron & Samuel, 2003). Nigeria was created from three large regional units with long standing history, culture, tradition and even contradictions. As buttressed by Hassan (2014), Nigeria is a country laden with diversities which are either ethno-cultural or linguistico-religious existing side-by-side despite their convolutions. It has been argued that the colonial conquest and of Africa and amalgamation of distinct groups gave rise to the pluralism of ethnic, cultural, lingual and religious diversities found in Nigeria.

As documented by Aziegbe (2014), the most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria, has over 250 ethnic groups and is a classic example of crossways in Africa. Of the three groups in the country; Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa/Fulani, with the Northern Hausa/Fulani dominant with 28% population, while the Eastern Igbo and Western Yoruba represent 19% and 21% respectively. The North is predominantly Muslim while the Western and Eastern population are Christians. Other groups include Kanuri, mostly Muslims 4%; Ijaw mostly Christians, 9%; Tiv, 2.7% and Ibibio mostly Christians 3.6%. The Igbo had no central authority and were thus referred to as stateless and egalitarian having clans as their basis of political organization and the highest central figure was the head as opposed to the Yoruba which had an existing authority traceable to the Ife Kingdom. There is also the mid-west based Benin Kingdom (Oranika, 2004). This exposition is crucial to understanding the peculiarity, distinctiveness, diversity, as well as the autonomy of the groups that make up Nigeria before colonial amalgamation and consequently, adoption of federalism.

In 1979, Nigeria adopted the US model of presidential federalism making her susceptible to operating a constitutional federalism which is integrated. Nigeria has thirty-six sub-national governments and a central government with both having the executive president as both the head of state and head of government, who must have garnered substantial votes from states within the country and the FCT; at least one-quarter votes from two-third of the total number of states. It is also mandatory for a political party to have a national outlook; have citizens of all ethnic and religious affiliations all over the country as members, before it can be registered. So also, the possessions of the party; logo, symbol, etc. should not give the impression that the party's activities is restricted to a particular part of the country, purpose of which is to ensure moderate representation (Obehi, 2013).

The Nigerian federal structure has its root in 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates by the then British colonial government for ease of administration; unitary (Kolawole, 1998). As documented by Obehi (2013), this system of government was bequeathed to Nigerians by the colonial administration following consultations with Nigerians who were rooting for regional autonomy. Thus, the constitutional arrangements that followed after 1946 to 1966 gave more authority to the regions. Due to its colonial origination, the system of government adopted was parliamentary with the North, East and West regions. Just as expected, the political parties formed had this ethnic outlook thus making the center a 'prize' to be captured by all, thus birthing contestations, competition, rivalry and opposition. Owing to its numerical strength, the North was able to dominate the center and had the size of the other regions joined together.

This constituted a problem in itself and led to electoral and census related problems which in turn birthed chaos with the other regions; Eastern and Western viewing it as hegemonic and feeling not only shortchanged, but dominated and cheated. This, coupled with the clamour for recognition by minority groups not only heightened political tension and pressure but also raised suspicion of

one group against another. This affected virtually every sphere and domain of national life and governance and further culminated into military intervention; the first of its kind, on January 15, 1966.

Due to its centrist orientation and the need to quench the burning fire of inter-ethnic contestations and rivalry, the military favoured a unitary system of government which was short-lived as the counter-coup of July 29, 1966 brought in another military government which reverted to federalism and eventually in 1967 separated the existing regions into twelve (12) states, having failed to obviate the civil war which lasted 1967-1970. The war which was principally a tussle for secession had at its aftermath, the military regime shifting power to the center as a precautionary measure. This deliberate and precise effort of power concentration at the center, gave Nigeria a federal outlook with a unitary style of vertical power distribution.

Consequently, as opposed to the U.S. model of federalism which had the coming together of sovereignties, the Nigerian federalism was such that transferred powers to sub-national units until the-then unitary structure. By implication, the powers the central government held dearly for devolution to the sub-national units, had always been theirs.

Sir Arthur Richards' splitting up of the country into regions as enshrined in the then 1946 Richard's constitution gave the country an appearance of a federal state and was further concretized by the Macpherson constitution of 1951 by appointing Lieutenant-Governors to superintend the regions, established legislative as well as executive councils, and granted them jurisdictional powers. The 1954 Lyttleton constitution finally abrogated the unitary system-façade paraded as a federal system by creating a real federal structure which allocated powers to both the federal and the sub-national units. This constitution established a Supreme Court to avoid and/or mediate in case of constitutional conflicts between the national and federating units. Though with trifling modifications, this federal expression conferred on Nigeria by the colonial rulers was however retained in Nigeria constitution even after independence (Hassan, 2014).

The above developments describes how unitary government was done away with and eventually ruled out. This can be said to have been necessitated by the fear of Hausa/Fulani; "the disadvantaged", domination of other "advantaged" ethnic groups. The dominant Hausa/Fulani desired self-government inside a federal Nigeria as against the Igbo and Yoruba which viewed such a desire as an avenue to run their own matters. Thus, these groups both saw gains in remaining as one indivisible country even in the face of secession which was used as a bargaining chip to achieve advantageous concerns in the makeup of the country.

No gainsaying that the Nigerian federal structure has helped to confine linguistic, ethnic, cultural cum socio-political and religious division, as well as conflict and other related problems (Clark, 2003). The absence of a recurring civil war is largely attributable to the present federal structure (ICG, 2010). Multistate federalism in Nigeria has not only guaranteed self-determination through self-government for the diverse ethnic groups, but has also laid to barest minimum the issue of disparity common to many federations, first republic federalism of 1960-1966 inclusive (Clark, 2003). The emergence of democracy increased the access of all ethnic groups; majority and minority, to government. Likewise, it created an avenue for common negotiations, which has helped nip authoritarian inclinations. As buttressed by Jinadu (2002), for instance, the immoderate ambition of President Obasanjo to retain his position as president of Nigeria against the constitutional provisions is as a result of general denunciation and disapproval.

### 3. RATIONALE FOR ADOPTION OF FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

Three essential reasons are responsible for the advancement of Nigerian federalism; first being as a result of the need for the British to exert a neocolonial control of the country post-independence, thus warranting a deliberate imposition of the federal system of government on Nigeria. This was necessary for the British to continue to protect her economic interest and increase her political leverage after independence. This sought political leverage can only be achieved when the constituent units are kept as apart as possible and their internal affairs is controlled; hence, the calculated federal structure. Secondly, the colonial administration could have only been made possible and easier when governed from the center. The reason for this is not far-fetched from the fact that Nigeria is a territorially large and culturally diverse country; hence the political development. Finally, federation in Nigeria was of formerly independent nations, communities, empires and autonomous kingdoms married together into a federal union, as against being a unitary system broken into federating units (Obehi, 2013). By implication, considering the historical and political development of Nigerian federalism, opting for federalism was a calculated one (Aba, 2006). Considering the heterogeneity of Nigeria, adopting a federal system remained the most viable alternative for the founding fathers, especially to help in protecting the concerns of the sub-national governments. The federal republican constitution of 1963 revealed this by clearly defining the powers and jurisdiction of the constituent units; a chief feature of federalism (Aba, 2006).

### 4. FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA: THE CONUNDRUM

Prior Nigerian independence in 1960, the individuality or otherwise unconventionality of the various federating units of Northern, Eastern and Western Nigeria was not in doubt. With the Western and Eastern Nigeria attaining independence in 1957 and Northern

Nigeria in 1959, the sovereignty and autonomy of the federating units was further reinforced. In other words, these federal units had the option to separate as autonomous entities in the comity of nations in the said years; 1957 and 1959. This has made some contemporary political analyst reject the claims that Nigeria's problems is as a result of the British amalgamation of 1914. After all, the Nigerian leaders lost the chance evident in their failure to extricate from the union when the opportunity presented itself in 1957. Though, the colonial powers left decades ago, the introduction of federalism and its operation has been marred by unrest, instability and general backwardness (Hassan, 2014). It is against this background that this work turns to appraise the challenges bedeviling federalism in Nigeria.

As noted by Sagay (2008), Nigeria's operation of federalism is simply on paper since the precepts and structures of federalism have not been fully embraced in the polity. For starters, the federal government have been dominating the scene and has assumed superiority over the federating units since the intervention of military in Nigerian politics. Upon liberation, the regions were independent and wielded outstanding powers with which they functioned independently of each other. Aside from having independent revenue bases, the regions also had distinct constitutions, foreign missions. All these and many more changed under military dispensation. As enshrined in Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended); section 4(2), the federal government is in charge of items under the Exclusive list and still has joint responsibilities with states under the Concurrent list even though the federal government has overwhelming powers in areas of contradiction. Hegemony as exercised by the central government (resulting as a means to foster national integration) at the expense of the federating units is partly responsible for struggle and disorderliness, inter-ethnic contestations and unhealthy rivalry among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, and indeed sub-Sahara Africa.

In the opinion of Horowitz (2007), special dispensations is generally possible under asymmetrical federalism, while it is more guaranteed at the sub-national level than at the center. From experience, it is deducible that federalism in Nigeria is such in which the central government cannot adequately represent the diverse and conflicting yearnings of the varied ethno-linguistic and religio-cultural groups. Instead, the centralized mode of federalism has given the various groups the impression that their plights and agitations can only be addressed by the central government, thus making the groups bypass the authority of the states. The secessionist agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a case in point. The over-centralization of power at the centre has led to the overburdening of the national government with socio-political related issues which climaxed and eventually broke the first republic down and consequently led to war.

Fight to capture the center thus became attractive since the center became a prize to be fought over along ethno-religious lines. Resultantly, elections became difficult as they were flawed by violence and open confrontations, while other germane programmes such as creating new states, head count, proceeds sharing, and third tier government creation and control are given ethnic and religion undertones (Suberu, 2006). Suberu further opined that this antagonism foreshown a "race to the presidency" scenario in Nigeria where every group seeks to capture the center for fear of being dominated.

Financial autonomy, an inherent feature of federalism, proposed by scholars of federalism has remained a mirage in the country due to the degree of federal government involvement in issues ranging from grants-in-aid and financial policies which has increased the powers of the central government and further weakened the federating units. With the increase in accruals and proceeds from oil boom, the federal government had increased revenue at its disposal and became financially more relevant than the states than before. With this financial prowess came the ability to undertake more projects which were until then under the states' purview.

The federal government also took on the role of giving pecuniary aid to sub-national units. By implication, states not in concert with the philosophy operational at the center may not benefit from this largesse; an example of which is Yobe state and by extension, Lagos state. They (Yobe and Lagos) found it difficult to secure aid and succor from the centre as they were at logger heads with the centre and they are not controlled by the party that controls the centre. Some states even sacrificed their principles to curry financial favour from the centre. This sort of practice is inimical to the working of a perfect federalism which confers financial autonomy on the regions; a requisite for enabling the various units the ability to exercise their powers within their jurisdiction without shameless sourcing for pecuniary relief or bail-out as has been the case in the country (Hassan, 2014).

Suberu (2006) alluded to this fact when he stressed that with the adoption of federal structure coupled with oil accruals increment, there was a tinkering with the revenue formula in the country at post-independence. Before then, the method of allocating proceeds was derivation which was later for a redistributive system. This sort of dependence wherein over eighty percent of states' revenue is gotten at the benevolence of the national government is nothing but an aberration to the precepts of financial competence. This invariably led to intemperate corruption at the sub-federal level and choked the autonomy of the federating units. This further increased the dependence on oil as majorly found among federating units who contribute little to the central purse. Due to the lazy access to finance, clamour for state creation has taken centre stage among the agitations that heat up the polity. The Nation (2011) did observe that deciding on a balanced and all-encompassing way of sharing revenue is one of the chief issues impeding the federation. Hence, there is an urgent need for an encircling design to be presented, which will not only encourage



efficiency, but will also grant autonomy, sufficiency, equality and creativity to the various federating units. There is indeed a need for a real federal structure that will allow the federating units to perform their tasks as deem fits and with ultimate liberty.

The strengthening of the third level of government in Nigeria can be traced to 1976; year of local government reforms, which ushered in an even local government system; constitutional provided for the other levels of governments to contribute specific fractions of their proceeds to the third level of government, granted jurisdictional competence to local governments in areas bothering on collection of local taxes and proficiency in areas bothering on motor parks and marketplaces. Despite being enshrined in the 1979 constitution and being further entrenched in the 1999 constitution, these reforms didn't move the states in the subsequent republic to accord the local governments the degree of sovereignty they deserve. This was fairly due to the fact that the states want to maintain dominance over the local governments the same way such treatment is meted on it by the federal government on one hand, and because states are also scuffling to regain their independence from the centre, on the other hand, thus making states government prioritize reducing the control of the local governments (Hassan, 2014). Suberu (2006) also noted that one of the challenges of federalism in Nigeria is the federal character principle as enshrined in the constitution, which after close observation is a transcendent avenue aimed at addressing centre-rush, but has attracted disagreements by virtue of its mode of application.

Obehi (2013) noted that corruption remains an instructive factor to note when attempting a prognosis of any problem in Nigeria. Ethnic as well primordial affinities shrouded by indifference at the federal government after independence, caused gladiators to regard the centre as a way of positioning their ethnic groups on the path of dominance and political might. (Suberu, 2006). This bred wanton corruption; through misappropriation of funds, looting, and embezzlement, favouritism and prejudice particularly with the extravagance which the oil boom brought. The covert brashness exhibited by the military backed up by its disrespect for human right and civility imposed on Nigeria a water gate of economic irresponsibility, suppression, repression, oppression and impunity. According to Perry (2011), the following indices backed the elongation of exploitation and corruption in Nigeria, and they are: economic hardship, dishonesty, ethnic loyalties as well as state regulation of the economy. The destabilizing consequence of corruption has triggered unconceivable financial discrepancy, causing few citizens actively involved, while a substantial number feels neglected and isolated. This has a direct effect on socio-political restiveness, considering that a teeming population of youths discontented to the extent of being readily available to turn ethnicity and religion related matters to inter-ethnic group violence (Oko, 2002). The cancerous bile of corruption is very noticeable in administrative and bureaucratic spheres, causing socio-economic paralysis which has infected virtually all institutions in the society. This social malady has produced the sloppiness for all kinds of excesses to blossom. The issue of non-indigeneship is another form of social alienation adopted by state and local governments alike, to formulate policies that frustrate and misalign non-indigenes from socio-economic cum socio-politic benefits (Obehi, 2013).

## 5. FEDERALISM, NATIONAL QUESTION, BIAFRA AND SECESSIONISM IN NIGERIA

As observed by Gellners (cited by Hassan, 2014), a mounting concern to adopt federalism as means of checkmating plural societies is observable. It is assumed that political acknowledgement of ethnic and cultural multiplicity through the adoption of a federal structure reduces ethnic pressures, strains and conflicts in ethnically diverse countries, and as such, federalism is offered as a halfway house between unification and separateness, as a compromise between ethnic-patriotism, and as a congruence or confluence amid states.

Watts (cited by Hassan, 2014) submitted that there are three assumptions that have been made concerning federalism: first being that federalism combines shared rule and self-rule to offer practical solutions to unity embedded in diversity through representation, yet it is a far cry from the desired panacea to political ills. Secondly, federalism thrives on public approval and acceptance by respecting constitutional norms and arrangements enmeshed in tolerance and compromise. Thirdly, amidst the plethora of federal systems and narrower kinds, there are still many disparities in the application of the federal notion. The national question has not only been a present day issue. It has been the precursor to the amalgamation which marked a tectonic realignment of the different enclaves that makes up the present state, Nigeria. The post-colonial state has witnessed some debates as to solving the question varying from whether federalism; power sharing; resource control; regionalism among others can truly solve the aching and habitual national question (Thompson, Ojukwu and Nwaorgu, 2016).

It is in line with the above that Mato (2010) hinted that present drift of federalism in Nigeria is a clear deviation from that which was bequeathed to Nigeria by the British colonialists at independence. The fact that each region had relative autonomy and control over its revenue, made this a possibility. Yet, ethnic identity and religion played a decisive role in the kind of politics run and affected the 'citizenship clause'. Ethnic and religious identity continued to be the basis for making inputs into, and outputs from the system; political demands and political power. As a result of this, as mentioned by Osaghae (2002), primordial sentiments such as ethnic cleavages, religious affinity, cultural loyalties and lingual ties has come to characterize virtually every aspect of Nigeria life especially

in areas such as creation and membership of parties, sharing of wealth, education, voting, appointment and even formation of new states have become increasingly tainted by these fault lines.

Boyle, and Englebert, (2006) indicated that separatist violence is not out of place considering the alleged-discrimination suffered by various groups in the federation. Osaghae (2007) pointed out that agitation linked to social movements; due to inequity, exclusion, alienation and marginality, often manifest from complaints, criticism, and social discontent against unethical political practices in the system. In some cases, these agitations serve as the only equipment ordinary people have with which to fight against powerful political activities, opponents and states. Arguably, the factors that are attributed to separatist agitations, or secessionist threats with special reference to Nigeria, are: controversial political and constitutional provisions, ethnic identity, cultural multiplicity, heterogeneity, wide-ranging administrative practices, complications of transport and communications, all of which are connected with the introduction of federalism, personality differences between Nigerian leaders pre and post-independence, as well as the absence of a resilient ideological magnet (Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). This separatist tendency is also referred to as secession, for which Biafra has been known in Nigeria.

As noted by Mehmed (2016), the forte of our political union came under trial post-independence when the Igbo agitated for break-away; otherwise, secession, to create Biafra. The secession was followed by successive ethnic pogroms in the Northern States targeted at Igbos. Resulting from an era of civil unrest, coup d'état, counter-coup d'état and strife, ethnic contestations spiraled and informed an idea of an Igbo conspiracy. The massacres in the North were said to have claimed many lives which were of Igbo origin which led to Igbos in that part of the country going back to their land after which the breakaway of Biafra was pronounced in May 1967.

The term secession has been used oftentimes in the same perspective as self-determination and dissolution (Mavric, 2012). These words, though interconnected, are not absolutely synonymous. Secession may be defined as the practice by which an assemblage tries to detach itself from the entity to which it is, and to form a novel entity on part of the land of that state. It requires delineation from devolution or grant of independence which is associated with the process through which a state grants autonomy on a specific region through judicial processes. Secession is not a consensual procedure but a unilateral process (Crawford in Ojibara, 2016). There is a need to emphasize four important points from the above definition. First, secession can only be carried out by a group of people and not individual. Since, there is no one man state, individual secession does not arise. Secondly, there must be territorial connectedness among the group trying to secede. Another feature from the above definition is the fact establishing the voice of exit of a particular group. Lastly, a forceful declaration of independence by a group of people without dialogue and consent or what (Mavric, 2012) refers to as unilateral process. The principle of self-determination appeared in the eighteenth century upon which a new order emerges.

Fundamentally connected with the democratic idea, self-determination was to correct the injustices, biases and arbitrariness of dynasties rule. Theoretically, self-determination denotes the practice by which individuals freely express their political will by selecting their own government at a stage where reference to nationalism appears unnecessary (Jacquin in Ojibara, 2016).

Upon completion, newly created states form a new political and legal unit, whereby the state where the part seceded from continues to maintain its government, political and legal identity devoid of the withdrawn part (Mavric, 2012). Thus secession is not mutually exclusive from self-determination and dissolution since must secessionists hinged their claims for a new independent state, whether from colonial control or a part of a sovereign state on national self-determination, and secession of different parts (units) that make a central government may lead to the state to cease to exist (dissolution). Secession is at the center of self-determination and dissolution. First, while separatists always base their demands on national self-determination, the end which they want to achieve is an independent state (secession) i.e. national self-determination is a means to an end. The relationship between the two concepts is transitory. The relationship between secession and dissolution depends on whether the secession of units from an independent state leads to the total or complete collapse of the state. For example, the collapse of former USSR into 15 independent states, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two independent republics of Czech and Slovakia and the disbanding of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), into Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Croatia, however, after Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia, the remaining territories still continue as Ethiopia. Same as South Sudan from Sudan, as such secession doesn't necessarily lead to dissolution (Ojibara, 2016).

According to Ojeleye (2010) and buttressed by Achebe (2012), it can be claimed that independence from colonial rule set Nigeria on a rollercoaster ride of chaos and destruction in which regionalism, ethnicism, nepotism, thuggery and political brinkmanship were the order of the day. The series of crises that befell Nigeria shortly after independence dramatically led to the military coup of January 15, 1966, headed by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, an Igbo, led to the demise of four senior Northern soldiers, two senior Northern political leaders, and premier of western region and subsequently fitted General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, as the leader of Nigeria's first military rule. Given the ethnic distribution of the casualties of the January coup and considering that the leader of the



coup and Ironsi were both Igbo, the new regime was thus branded to be an attempt by the Igbo to dominate the country. Ironsi turned out to be a victim of fate and circumstance, he inherited the benefits of a coup he had not created, but failed to address the accusations laid against his regime, and to allay the fears that the coup that brought him into power was sectional.

The counter coup of July 1966 led by Murtala Muhammed, the ascension of Yakubu Gowon to head of state, despite the fact that he was not the most senior military officer, alleged murdered of 185 Igbo officers, the massacre of the Easterners in the north was seen as a northern revenge of the first coup that brought the northern control of federal government to a halt. Prior to the riots in northern Nigeria, the Igbo dominated the army (ranked officers), educational institutions and the federal civil services. The pogrom in northern Nigeria was alleged to be a state policy to exterminate the Igbo and their dominance in Nigeria affairs. The crises in northern Nigeria saw over one million Igbos returned to the eastern region which resulted to a refugee problem. In January 1967 there was an attempt to discuss the area of conflict in what is now known as Aburi accord, on May 27, 1967 Gowon called for a state of emergency and divided the country into twelve states, responding citing vindictive doings focused at the mostly Igbos, the federal control's inability to guarantee the wellbeing of Easterners amidst directed incrimination of the government in the killings of its own people, thus, Odumegwu Ojukwu proclaimed the independence of the republic of Biafra signaled the Nigeria-Biafra war (Achebe, 2012:92).

## 6. THE CASE OF IPOB IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

Following the return to civil rule in 1999, the Igbos have continually craved for a just society where every ethnic groups can compete favorably for political power and where economic resources is equitably distributed through non-violence. Though other splinter groups, radical, pseudo-radical and non-radical have emerged including but not limited to; The Igbo Concerned Citizens, Igbo Elders' Forum, Igbo Renaissance Movement, MASSOB, BZM (Biafra Zionist Movement), IPOB among others. In the fifth republic, precisely on the 26 August, 2004, Ralph Uwazurike's MASSOB formed in 1999 called on the Igbo in cities across the country and in the Southeast to halt their businesses which was adjudged a success (Ojukwu, 2009). In May 2005, there were protests in France, Italy, Germany and Canada and also established a radio station in the US to reach out to Igbos in the diaspora and to attract attention from the international community (Ojukwu, 2009). Also, The Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) founded by a United Kingdom-based lawyer, Benjamin Onwuka who hails from Bende local government area of Abia state in 2010 with affiliations with Igbos in Diasporas, United Kingdom, United States and South Africa in which it claimed that it sent its application to the UN for an observer status for the Republic of Biafra on 6th August 2012 with reference BZM/OS/REPUBLIC OF BIAFRA claimed that the security of lives and property, practice of religion and freedom of Association of the Biafra folks cannot be in assured Nigeria, hence the call for an independent state on 5th November 2012. He however put the threat to action on 8th March, 2014 when the Biafra flag was hoisted at the government house, Enugu state until the group was chased by the Nigerian Police (Edike, 2014).

The foregoing shows that the national question in Nigeria is questionable and is a dream not lived by all the groups in the country, with specific reference to the South-East as displayed by the Independent People of Biafra.

According to Taiwo (2016), 46 years after the Nigerian civil war, the Igbo nation, especially a significant portion of its leadership, never reconciled with the idea of 'Nigeria'. At intervals since then, with different degrees of severity, the demand for separation from Nigeria and the inauguration of an Igbo-dominated Republic of Biafra has become a permanent feature of the Nigeria political landscape. After the assassination of Aguiyi Ironsi in the counter coup of 1966, No Igbo has emerged Nigerian President, the closet ever since was when Alex Ekwuemen was vice president to Sheu Shagari during the second republic of 1979-1983. This they claim is a deliberate political marginalization of the people of South-East. The Igbo proclaim to be the victim of the Nigeria-Biafra war, a war they refer to as genocide perpetrated by the North (Hausa-Fulani) and supported by the south-west (Achebe, 2012:228). The fact that the presidency has eluded the Igbo for too long added to their disaffection towards Nigeria state. Another major demand is the creation of one additional state in the core Igbo south east zone to be at equal with the other four zones with six state. The core Hausa-Fulani North-West zone has seven states.

Ojibara (2016) also alluded that the Biafra agitation has been a reoccurrence and seems the war does not really provide any solution to Nigeria problems, if four decades after an avoidable war, Nigeria existence as a unified country still not certain. Ojibara further argued that Umaru Musa Ya'adua in 2010 paved the way for Goodluck Ebele Jonathan from Bayelsa state (Niger-Delta) which was part of the eastern region during the first republic to become the president, the first from that region of the country. He enjoyed the support of the Igbo that earned him victory at 2011 poll. The Igbo consider Jonathan as their son even though he's of the Ijaw. However, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have increase the severity of violent protest in South East and South-South immediately after President Goodluck Jonathan failed in his re-election bid in 2015, won by All Progressive Congress candidate, General Muhammedu Buhari, a former military head of state from the core Northern Nigeria, demanding the independence of Biafra from Nigeria. Expectedly, the government responded by arresting the leader of (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu and some of its members for

treasonable felony and terrorism. Demonstration in celebration of Biafra day and to demand for Kanu's release turned bloody in South East states where over 40 people, including a soldier were reportedly killed and over 50 were arrested (Jimitota, 2016).

Ojibara (2016) believed that unlike the 1967-1970 attempted secession, lack of high profile government officials publicly supporting the new agitation for Biafra, the reduction of territorial influence of Biafra to the five (5) core Igbo south Eastern states, the unwillingness of the former oil rich minorities to join Biafra, representative democracy that guarantee membership into federal executive council, National Assembly etc. are some of the factors restricting and curtailing the present agitations. As noted by SBMorgen (2016), in reality, the recurring secession attempt is the result of a buildup of the various illogicalities within the Nigerian state. Various constitutions had been negotiated and adopted prior to 1966, but none addressed the fundamental social differences, ethnic imbalances, economic competition and political tensions that the Nigerian state struggled with. Before the Igbo secession that led to the civil war of 1967, the Hausa/Fulani dominant in the Northern section, and the Yoruba, dominant in the then Western region, had envisaged, even sometimes threatened secession. The end of the civil war and the victory of the Nigerian forces halted secession attempts – at least for a while. Recently, because the fundamentals were not addressed in the interregnum, agitations are resurfacing and seems to be perennial.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), directed by Nnamdi Kanu; a United Kingdom-based activist unlawfully imprisoned by the Nigeria government in defiance of orders emanating from the law court demanding his discharge, is an assembly representing the remnant of what was Biafra all through the civil war and before the colonial epoch of the Eastern section of the country (Vanguard News, 2015). To Odoemene (2012), the thrust remains that the root causes of the war have not been addressed and this has tainted the memory of Biafra. For instance, one of the beliefs upon which Biafra was founded was that the Nigerian task is a façade ensnared by fraud. The general motif put forward by the Igbos is that little or nothing has changed in Nigeria following Biafra's defeat.

According to Ugorji (2015), the remnants of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and their descendants not among those expended during the civil war of 1967-1970 between Nigeria and Biafra, has many factions:

- The Ohaneze Ndilgbo
- Igbo Leaders of Thought
- Biafran Zionist Federation (BZF)
- The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)
- Radio Biafra
- The Supreme Council of Elders of Indigenous People of Biafra (SCE)

As averred by Ugorji, reasons for the conflict can be best understood by appraising the Biafrans' and Nigerian Government's arguments respectively as thus:

### ***The Biafrans' Arguments***

- Prior the influx of the British into Africa, Biafra was hitherto an independent realm
- The 1914 amalgamation that united the North and South and created the new country called Nigeria is illegal because it was decided without their consent (it was a forced amalgamation)
- And the 100 years terms of the amalgamation experiment expired in 2014 which automatically dissolved the Union
- Economic, social and political ostracism in Nigeria
- Absence of progressive schemes in Biafraland
- Insecurity: killings of the Biafrans in the North
- Fear of total extinction

### ***Arguments of the Nigerian Government***

- All the other parts that make up the country were also independent before the British came.
- Other regions were also made to join the union and thus agreed to continue that way even after independence.
- At the end of the 100 years of the amalgamation, the past administration convened a National Dialogue and all the ethnic groups in Nigeria discussed the issues concerning the union, including the preservation of the union.
- Any expressed intention or attempt to overthrow the federal or state governments is considered as a treason or treasonable felony.

*Below is a summary of their demands:*

Declaration of the right of Biafrans to self-determination: Absolute liberation from Nigeria; or Self-determination inside Nigeria as obtainable in a confederal arrangement as per the agreement of the Aburi meeting in 1967; or A dissolution of the country Nigeria along ethnic lines as opposed to the breaking of the country by carnage. Such will alter the fraudulent union of 1914 in such a way that everybody would return to their ancestral native land as they were before the arrival of the British.

Emekesri (2012) argued that Biafra was an autonomous society which has its own region as revealed on the Map of Africa prior the arrival of Europeans, as is the case with Sudan, Egypt Ethiopia, Mali, etc. Biafra practiced independent classlessness among its clans as practiced amongst the Igbo nowadays. He also mentioned that what was declared by General Ojukwu in 1967 was not novel but had been in existence before the forceful marriage initiated by the British. This is a stance also held by Government of IPOB (2014) when it maintained that the British had consular relations with Biafrans before the entity Nigeria was fashioned. John Beecroft was the British Consul of the Bight of Biafra from June 30, 1849 to June 10, 1854 and had his headquarters in Fernando Po in the Bight of Biafra. The city of Fernando Po is now named Bioko in Equatorial Guinea and it was from the Bight of Biafra that John Beecroft, fervent to regulate the trade in the Western part and aided by Christian missionaries at Badagry, attacked Lagos which became a British colony in 1851 and was formally ceded to the Queen of England; Queen Victoria, in 1861, in whose honor Victoria Island suburb of Lagos State was called. Thus, British's recognized existence and contact with Biafraland before Lagos was annexed in 1861, is not in doubt.

The IPOB in the quest for self-determination is also playing the legality card, when it stressed that the law affords local people of a Biafra the right to uphold their indigenous identities, regardless of the fact that they have been granted nationality of a novel country; Nigeria, through the amalgamation of 1914. IPOB is in quest of putting to use, their privilege to self-government and reform, restore their primordial, and ancestral Biafra as an independent nation away from Nigeria (Government of IPOB, 2014). Meanwhile, the resurgence of the secessionist demands and agitations have been described as 'Neobiafranism'. And so the interrogators from the former Biafran side (arguably non-violent in their dispositions) have been variously depicted as neobiafrans (Onuoha, 2013). Consequently, to the extent that the extant interrogations are not peculiar to the aboriginal Biafrans, it logically follows that the citizenship-status questioners from the other agitated sections of the current Nigerian experimentation are also describable as neobiafrans. Hence we arrive at the construct of neobiafranism as the phenomenon that characterizes the manifold dimensions of the demands and efforts to (re)define who is a Nigerian citizen – to reassess the worth of Nigerian citizenship. Therefore, neobiafranism as analytical construct and research variable is conceptually related to the implied thesis of Chido Onumah in *We Are All Biafrans* (Onuoha, 2016). But the empirical trajectories and research questions of the two positions are quite different. Onumah's work is essentially and largely about the National Question in Nigeria. Neobiafranism in Nigeria is also exhibited in political / voter apathy. These are not only the tendencies of discontented citizens but also reactions by a citizenry whose statuses as citizens have not been manifestly and uniformly guaranteed by the state (Okeke, 2016).

It is instructive to note that having identified the secessionist tendencies of the IPOB and its far-reaching consequences for the national question and federal project of Nigeria, it is pertinent to proffer practicable solutions to the menace.

## 7. SELF-DETERMINATION, INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECESSION AND NIGERIA'S CONUNDRUM

According to Okoronkwo (2002), approximately 150 national liberation groups, comprised of indigenous peoples and minorities alike, have articulated their grievances through varying degrees of the exercise of self-determination. For those seeking complete autonomy, the results have varied. For example, in 1971, Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan through the assertion of self-determination. To contrast, Biafra's related effort to secede from Nigeria failed. Individuals must choose to assert the right of self-determination through an unrestricted and profound communication of their resolve. Moreover, the exercise of this right must be without outside interference or any form of undue influence. Self-determination is regarded to as the privilege enjoyed by all persons devoid of external force, to assert their state association, as well as the right to their autonomous state, not forgetting their right to socio-cultural and econo-political life as provided for by the international community.

One need for self-determination is to take out a group from the whims and caprices of political domination of another group, thereby giving room for the removed group to control its own fortune. Self-determination, as an inherent right, constructs a commitment to be carried out with respect to persons in reliant and non-reliant states. Although self-determination is described as "the realization of greater respect for human rights."

Okoronkwo further argued that self-determination embraces five rudimentary features, namely:

(1) governance based on popular opinion; (2) lack of domination, be it core or peripheral; (3) the unrestricted desire for development; economic, cultural or social (4) the pleasure of basic human rights; and (5) lack of segregation of any form. This approach encompasses both the periphery and core areas of self-determination. People can gain their independence and separate from the oppressor-state. It also guarantees the recognition of the rights of the various groups; both minority and majority alike, within the country so that none controls the other.

Ordinarily, international law recognizes self-determination as an inalienable fundamental human right. Consequently, the right to self-determination is synonymous with the right of freedom from alien tyranny, despotism, totalitarian governments, oppressors and tyranny, including other form of subjugation. It is characterized as the "condition and the cornerstone of exercising all the other rights and enjoying all other human rights." Self-determination is further predicated on the right of peoples to control their fate, and to free themselves of manifestations of oppression, ascendancy, repression, subjugation, and suppression, as well as other acts that infringe upon their fundamental rights. The notion of self-determination as a model is deemed important to everyone by the international bodies and is referenced in several instruments of international or transnational law, including the United Nations Charter.

In essence, Thompson et al. (2016), argues, the right to address a lack of suitable representation, pursue self-determination, and curb subjugation is guaranteed for all people who also reserve the privilege to exercise such right. However, the concepts of regional integrity and self-determination does suffer some level of pressure. Though, transnational law does not disallow separation, so much as it does not grant federating units a general right to break away from the original state, yet universal legitimate doctrines dictate exemptions to such objectivity. Thus, principles of self-determination and regional integrity remains a very technical and complex legal parlance. Regional integrity is said to merely defend the sacredness of transnational boundaries and does not control in-house matters i.e. secession. To this end, Roethke (2011) averred that secession is outlawed by territorial or regional integrity simply because the notion of secession tear apart a state's territory. The UN has guaranteed all indigenous groups the privilege of self-determination as preserved in A/RES/61/295 through the majority of its member voting in favour, 4 against and 11 including Nigeria being a member of the UN abstaining from the adoption of vote (Vanguard, 2015). Also, as contained in the first chapter: section 1(1) of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended), the constitution is said to be supreme and that its provisions has a mandatory force on all persons and/or authorities in the federation. It is in this same light that section 2(1) maintains that Nigeria is not only an indissoluble sovereign state, but that the country is indivisible and to be referred to as the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1999).

Self-determination and state acknowledgment or recognition remain identical concepts in legal parlance just as international law cannot be detached from state interests and transnational politics. A state can only be fully acknowledged legally when its existence is consented to by the world's powerful states and the international community, not minding whether such a state possess the features of a state as defined by law. Today, having helped states and peoples across Africa and around the world to attain independence and self-determination just like in cases of Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Western Sahara (Thompson and Onifade, 2015) among others, the Nigerian state is caught in the same web and this remains the quandary of the Nigerian state even as the secessionist believe that the country is better when divided and weaker while united (Thompson et al., 2016).

As opined by OMF (2013), most Nigerians envisioned the rebirth of a Nigeria through the Sovereign National Conference (SNC). Though this is not to undermine the potency of SNC; after all, after following South Sudan's independence, the demands for SNC gained impetus, but to note that the calls for SNC are not alien to Nigeria. Indeed, the agitations can be traced to early 2000s when the leaders of the Igbo, Yoruba and minority groups in Niger-Delta backed pleas. This was premised on the grounds that SNC allows for a re-negotiation of the 'forced union', even though the federal government was not in concert with such demands and greeted the notion with mistrust, perhaps because the same leaders calling for an SNC are from the groups that exhibited dissatisfaction with the 'union'. To be clear, the rise of militias canvassing their displeasure against the state bears its identity to these groups; Igbo, Yoruba and minorities of Niger-Delta, with the exception of the Northern Nigeria. Thus the budding secessionist groups in the federation are the minority of South-South, Igbo and Yoruba (all of southern residence), with Movement for the Actualization of a Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); a group of Igbo origin, having a dominant voice for secession (Obahi, 2013).

## 8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Relative Deprivation Theory

The choice of theory for this thesis is the Relative Deprivation theory (hereafter, RD). The adoption of this theory is premised on the fact that the researcher unequivocally contends that the secessionist agitations is as a result of social exclusion, misalignment, discrimination, segregation and political isolation of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The theory was first developed by

Runciman to explain attitudes of social inequality in twentieth-century England (Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). The major tenet of relative deprivation theory describes that people deprived of the things of high importance or necessity in their society - such as status, money, rights and justice among others, are prone to finding solace elsewhere which often leads to forming and/or joining social movements with a view to meet their expectations and allay their fears as well as address their grievances. This is why Runciman mentioned egoistic deprivation as referring to the feeling of an individual as against communal or comparative deprivation which is also group deprivation and is the dissatisfaction of the status of an entire group when compared to a another group.

According to Flynn (2009), a group's shared character can be strengthened by communal deprivation. Flynn argued that relative deprivation theory is an embodiment of social movement theory which began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and involves the study of and the political, social and cultural manifestation of social mobilization, as well as its attendant significances. Ted Robert Gurr (cited by Saleh, 2013), avers that Relative Deprivation (RD) is the pressure that arrives from the inconsistency between 'ought' and 'is' of shared value contentment, and such positions one for violence. In line with Gurr's explanation, Saleh (2013), argues, Relative Deprivation is the incongruities between people's expectations, what they want, what they eventually achieve and their competencies. Gurr believes that the concentration and strength of relative deprivation is a function of the level of supposed inconsistency between their competencies and value expectation. He strongly advocates that revolution is inevitable when people are not certain of achieving their conceived values coupled with the degree of frustration arising from the sternness of despair.

Gurr (cited by Saleh, 2013), asserts that the most palpable base for organizing antagonism against the state is ethnicity. He maintains that the level of political unrest is determined by the level of disturbance or frustration perceived. In other words, breakdown in civil and orderliness and ultimately the rise of violence in a state is a direct function of the degree of relative deprivation especially as it bothers on societal prestige, affluence, shared values, and political participation, all of which can also lead to deterioration of ideological logic. For Migdal (2001:150), cohesion is determined by how much role the state play in individual's lives, how it respond to conflicts and how people express themselves towards it. Saleh (2011), contends that discontentment and disorientation towards the state and among the people is bound to occur when the state becomes unsuccessful in matching up to people's expectation, especially when their claims are hinged on rightful assertions. This made Gurr hold the view that discontent intensifies when there is growth in expectation at the expense of competencies.

Saleh (2013) building upon the work of Gurr, holds that discontent is birthed by the inconsistency between people's expectation and they eventually achieve or not achieve. He reiterated that frustration is a precursor to violence. He argues that the wider the margin between perceived marginalization or discrepancy and value competencies as well as value expectations, the more intense the probability of hostility and violence. Relative Deprivation theory thus describes any perceived sidelining between a people's prospects and their competencies in meeting these prospects or expectations. Hence, the denial of such expectations creates a crack between the state and the marginalized or deprived group. As a result, the bigger the crack or degree of deprivation, the greater the scale of belligerence and violence.

### ***Relative Deprivation Theory and the IPOB Case***

As contributed by Nwagboso (2012), Relative Deprivation theory was necessitated on the need to bridge the gap between revolutions and revolts in the society and political as well as socio-economic inequities. Relative Deprivation theory; individual and group based theory of aggression, contends that frustration becomes the norm when satisfaction of value expectation in terms of economic and political benefits is surpassed by the expectation itself. Therefore, the aggregate of such frustration manifests in form of violence and conflict. By inference, the theory explains the nature of and reasons for rebellion, revolts, conflicts, insurgencies, agitations and recurrent rise of violent groups against the federal government of Nigeria. Following the stipulations of the theory, it is safe to aver that the increase in and demands of insurgent groups, militia groups, and violent agitations is as a result of the failure of the central government to ensure collective development among various groups in the country. This also holds water in arguing for the reasons why insecurity in the Northern part of the country has arisen and persisted this long. These are signposts of government's failure in its primary responsibility of protecting lives and property. This is an indication of government's role in not only causing but also furthering economic inequality and socio-political rights denial among various groups in the country (Anosike, 2010:8). Socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, inequality, poverty, illiteracy, low per capita income poor infrastructure, high rate of inflation, recession, low technological development and poor health facilities has further exacerbated the gap between the groups in the country and has made violent agitations more attractive.

Relative deprivation theory describes the perception of experience held by individuals or groups when they are deprived of what they are entitled to. It explains the economic, political and social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute; based on perceptions of justice and self-worth just as much as on the need to fulfil basic human rights. Relative depravation theory highlights

social exclusion, marginalization and poverty among a group of people, not arising from lack but from deprivation or denial. The consequences of relative deprivation are evident in the feelings, attitudes, behaviours, political attitudes, participation in shared action and feelings of stress. The grievances as defined through the deprivation aspect of this theory are considered instrumental in analyzing the convolutions of inequality and the 'raison d'être' of the Biafran separatist movement and agitations in Nigeria. In other words, the theory explains the Biafra agitations as responses to deprivation and inequality that led to Biafran grievances, and explains in part the motivations for protests and rebellion against the state which is perceived as failing or insecure (Ezemenaka and Prouz, 2016).

## 9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Reconciling the IPOB and the Nigerian Government is a prerequisite for the cementing of the national question and federal project in Nigeria. As Hirsch (2011:167) observed, reconciliation becomes imperative to not only unify a society with a vicious past, but to also instill a sense of shared belongingness. Reconciliation can thus be realized through forgiveness and apologies done in collectiveness. Reconciliation seeks to transform rather than restore (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008:19). As opined by Gibson's (2004), for reconciliation to be successful, states need to note that memory cannot be suppressed, they should instead acknowledge the differences and disparities that seek to destabilize their stability and togetherness. As such, giving way to legitimate claims becomes essential to reconciliation (Hamber and Wilson, 2002).

Ugorji (2015) advocated for irredentism, peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building as the way out of the woods. Horowitz (cited by Ugorji) sees irredentism as the restoration, reclaiming, or reoccupying of a country, territory or homeland formerly belonging to a people. Often the people are scattered across many other countries as a result of colonialism, forced or unforced migration, and war. Irredentism seeks to bring at least some of them back to their ancestral homeland. Irredentism can be realized in two ways: by violence or war and by due process of law or through the legal process.

### **Irredentism through Violence**

#### ***Supreme Council of Elders***

A typical case of a war orchestrated for liberation of a people of the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970; fought by Biafrans in self-defense. It is estimated that more than 3 million people lost their lives during this war including significant number of children and women as a result of a combination of factors: direct killing, humanitarian blockade that resulted in a deadly sickness called kwashiorkor. "Both Nigeria as a whole and the remnants of Biafra who were not consumed in this war still feel the trauma of the war lingering in their hearts. Having experienced, and fought during, the war, the Supreme Council of Elders of Indigenous People of Biafra rejects war as the way to realize Biafran agitations and value expectations (Government of IPOB, 2014, p. 15).

#### ***Radio Biafra***

Under the direction of Nnamdi Kanu and based in London, Radio Biafra is susceptible to adopting violence as its means to an end. Through their online broadcast, this group has mobilized millions of Biafrans and their sympathizers both in Nigeria and abroad, and it is reported that they have support the support of Biafrans world over especially in cash so as to procure arms for the war. Based on their assessment of the struggle, they believe that independence devoid of war is a mere a wishful thinking. They are also confident that they will win the war if it ever comes to that. This group consists of the younger ones who did not experience the civil war (Government of IPOB, 2014).

### **Irredentism through the Legal Process**

#### ***Supreme Council of Elders***

Having lost the war of 1967-1970, the Supreme Council of Elders (SCE) of Indigenous People of Biafra favours legal process as its means out of the quagmire. The SCE on September 13, 2012, signed and filed a Legal Instrument before the Federal High Court Owerri against the Nigerian government. The case is still in court. The basis of their argument is the portion of the international and national laws that guarantee the right to self-determination to indigenous peoples (Government of IPOB, 2014).

#### ***Radio Biafra***

On the other hand, Radio Biafra under Nnamdi Kanu remain committed to the use of war saying the use of legal means has never been successful. They unequivocally opine that independence without violence or war is impossible (Government of IPOB, 2014).



## Peacekeeping

According to Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall (2011), peacekeeping is suitable in preventing violence from degenerating into war, from containing the spread of the war if it eventually breaks out and to initiate a ceasefire for post-war reconstruction. To create space for the other forms of conflict resolution –mediation and dialogue for example-, there is need to contain, reduce or minimize the intensity and impact of violence on the ground through responsible peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. By this, it is expected that the peacekeepers should be well trained and guided by ethical deontological codes so as to neither do harm to the population they are expected to protect nor become a part of the problem they have been sent to manage.

## Peacemaking & Peacebuilding

After the deployment of peacekeepers, efforts should be made to utilize the different forms of peacemaking initiatives –negotiation, mediation, settlement, and tracks of diplomacy (Ramsbotham et al., 2011, Diamond & McDonald, 2013) to resolve the Biafra conflict. Three levels of peacemaking processes are proposed here: Intragroup Dialogue within the Biafra separatist movement using track 2 diplomacy. Conflict settlement between the Nigerian government and the pro-Biafran movement using a combination of track 1 and track two diplomacy. Multi-Track diplomacy (from track 3 to track 9) organized specifically for citizens from different ethnic groups in Nigeria, especially between the Christian Igbos (from the Southeast) and the Muslim Hausa-Fulanis (from the North).

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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